

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM: SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES

A review of the experience of the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM)

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Introduction

In general, Muslims:

- Live in constant dualism (thoughts and convictions)
- Carry nostalgic feelings towards their religious heritage.
- Interact with traditional social and religious institutions (immediate families, local communities, schools...etc).

However, these empathy feelings are unconsciously mixed up with secular intellectual concepts through a powerful western influence in politics, economy, culture , media and education. Such incoherent situation caused a lot of harm to the socio-cultural fabric of contemporary Muslim communities.

= Introduction

Such incoherence motivated some Muslim reformists and educators to come up with several alternatives that seek to modernize the inherited traditional system of Islamic education to a modern, progressive, and a moderate system of education, based on the idea of integration of curriculum.

What is an Integrated Curriculum?

- It claims moderation and balance between the acquisition of revealed and western sciences in one educational package.
- It marries revealed and acquired knowledge, by eliminating conflicts with western educational theory of education and harmonize the two educational experiences in one coherent amalgam.

What we want from this paper?

1. Reviewing the idea of school integrated curriculum through the experience of (IISM)
2. Highlighting the design of the (IISM) curriculum, its objectives, success and challenges.

Historical background

- The first World Conference on Muslim Education in Makah (1977)
- The establishment of International Islamic Universities (Malaysia, Pakistan, Uganda, Bangladesh) to provide education based on the principles of Islam and the achievement of human excellence.

- The International Islamic University Malaysia was established in 1983, has been instrumental in taking the concept of Islamization of knowledge a step further.
- In line with the same concept, IIUM established the (IISM) in September 1998.

- The objectives of establishing IISM were:
 1. To be a model of integrated Islamic education.
 2. To draw the traits of moderate, progressive & modern Islamic education.
 3. To cater for the needs of the children of Muslim expatriates working at IIUM.

Curriculum of (IISM)

The general objectives of the curriculum are:

- To develop a Muslim generation capable of critical, creative and ethical thinking.
- To produce Muslims by conviction.
- To produce Muslims who strive to fulfill their role as Allah's vicegerent on earth.
- To develop strong and highly educated Muslims for whom Islam is a complete way of life.

Academic package of IISM

Qur'an, Islamic Studies & Arabic (QISA)

- Qur'an(Iqra, Tilawah & Tahfeez), Islamic Studies, Islamic History/Ethics , A1stL / ASL / AFL

Arts & Humanities

- Arts & Design, History, Geography, Physical Education, Business, Accounting, Law, Hikmah, Economics, P.E

Science & Maths

- Science, Combined Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Additional Math, ICT

Languages

- EFL / ESL ,English Literature, French, Malay (N / NN)

Is IISM an exclusive model?

- IIS is fully owned by IIUM, an institution which adopts concepts of *moderation, tolerance, academic excellence, and Islamization of knowledge*. This approach shall be emphasized and nurtured in IISM curriculum.
- Tolerance is reflected in IISM's admission of students regardless of their race or religion, unlike other traditional religious schools which are usually perceived as extreme and hostile towards the other.

- The school is offering (Cambridge Program) which prepares students for university education, one of the most popular programs in South East Asia.
- To maintain its Islamic identity, and to achieve its aims as an integrated school, IISM offers an Islamic academic package which consists of: Qur'an, Islamic Education, Islamic History and Hikmah program (Islamic philosophy for children).

Challenges

1. The search for accreditation and social recognition.
2. Clients' background and expectations.
3. Textbooks content.
4. Teacher qualifications and turn over.
5. Cultural background, religious and sectarian affiliation of both students and teachers.

Conclusion

- IISM's graduates success to join world-class universities and their embarkment in careers in different fields of knowledge, after making a strong Islamic identity platform, gives glimpses of hope, boost and feel good spirit that the educational approach of integration is working.
- IISM did not achieve all of its goals, but won the honor of being in the avant-garde of the third way of integration.

Recommendations

- Muslim governments should help such projects (curriculum, text books, administrative and economic levy...etc)
- The present crisis of educational systems in the Muslim World are reflection of the current socio-economic and political realities. Thus, collective effort to tackle the sources of the crisis is a welcomed step.
- Aggressive campaigns to develop more modern Islamic educational materials, textbooks, and curriculum which cater to the needs of the new generation and contribute to the efforts of Islamic awakening.

The End

Q&A